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PLANES, BUSES, AND BELT NOTES: MANAGING THE MANY PITFALLS OF SHOW CHOIR TRAVEL

When you're confident you are fully prepared for a choir trip, it's a sure sign you're not. We've got the tips, the checklist, the team assignments, and damage-control strategies you need to survive choir life on the road.

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Disappointments are inevitable in show choir competition. How we handle the aftermath makes all the difference.

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editor's letter

February always feels like the deep breath before the plunge, doesn't it? We're standing at the edge of competition season—costumes are (mostly) finished, choreography is locked in (depending who you ask), and somewhere, someone is still trying to find that one missing prop that was definitely in the trailer last week.

That's what makes this issue one of my favorites every year—our annual Buyer's Guide. If January is about planning, February is about executing...and occasionally realizing you need one more wireless mic, a sturdier garment rack, or a miracle. The Buyer's Guide is here to help with at least two of those. It's packed with partners who understand this activity inside and out—companies that know what it means when you say, "We load in at 5:30 a.m." and don't even blink.

But beyond the gear and logistics, this issue also leans into the heart of what we do. We're proud to feature an organization doing the kind of work that reminds us just how powerful communities can be—bringing fresh water to people who don't have access to something many of us take for granted every single day. It's humbling, and it's a good reminder that while we chase trophies and perfect runs, there's a bigger world out there that benefits from the same passion and teamwork we celebrate on stage.

Speaking of chasing trophies...let's talk about disappointment. Because if you've been in show choir longer than five minutes, you've experienced it. We've included a piece that looks at how to handle those tough competition outcomes—the ones that don't match the effort, the expectations, or the bus ride home plans. It's not always easy, but it's always part of the journey. And sometimes, those moments shape programs far more than the wins. And then there's travel. Ah yes, the glamorous life of loading buses, wrangling room keys, tracking down missing students in hotel lobbies, and discovering that someone packed everything except their shoes. Our feature dives into the realities of show choir travel with tips to keep things running smoothly—or at least smoothly-ish.

As you flip through these pages, I hope you find resources that make your season easier, stories that keep you grounded, and maybe a few moments that make you laugh and say, "Yep, that's us."

To all the groups stepping onto stages in the coming weeks: best of luck this season. Perform boldly, support each other fiercely, and remember why you started doing this in the first place.

We can't wait to see what you bring to the stage.

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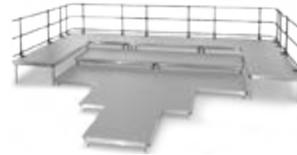
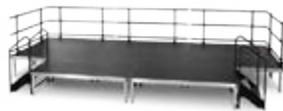
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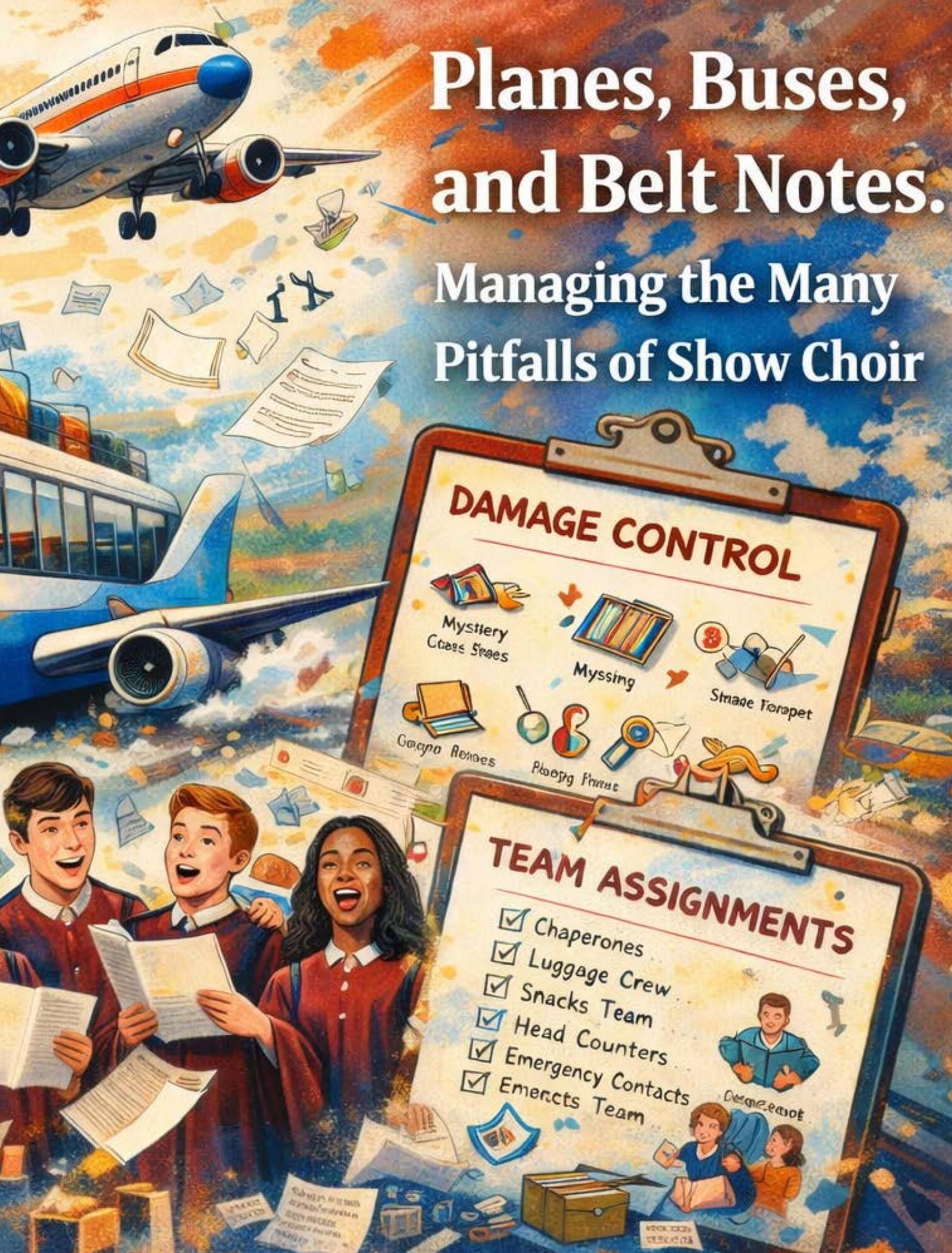
CHOIR ROAD TRIP CHECKLIST!

- 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



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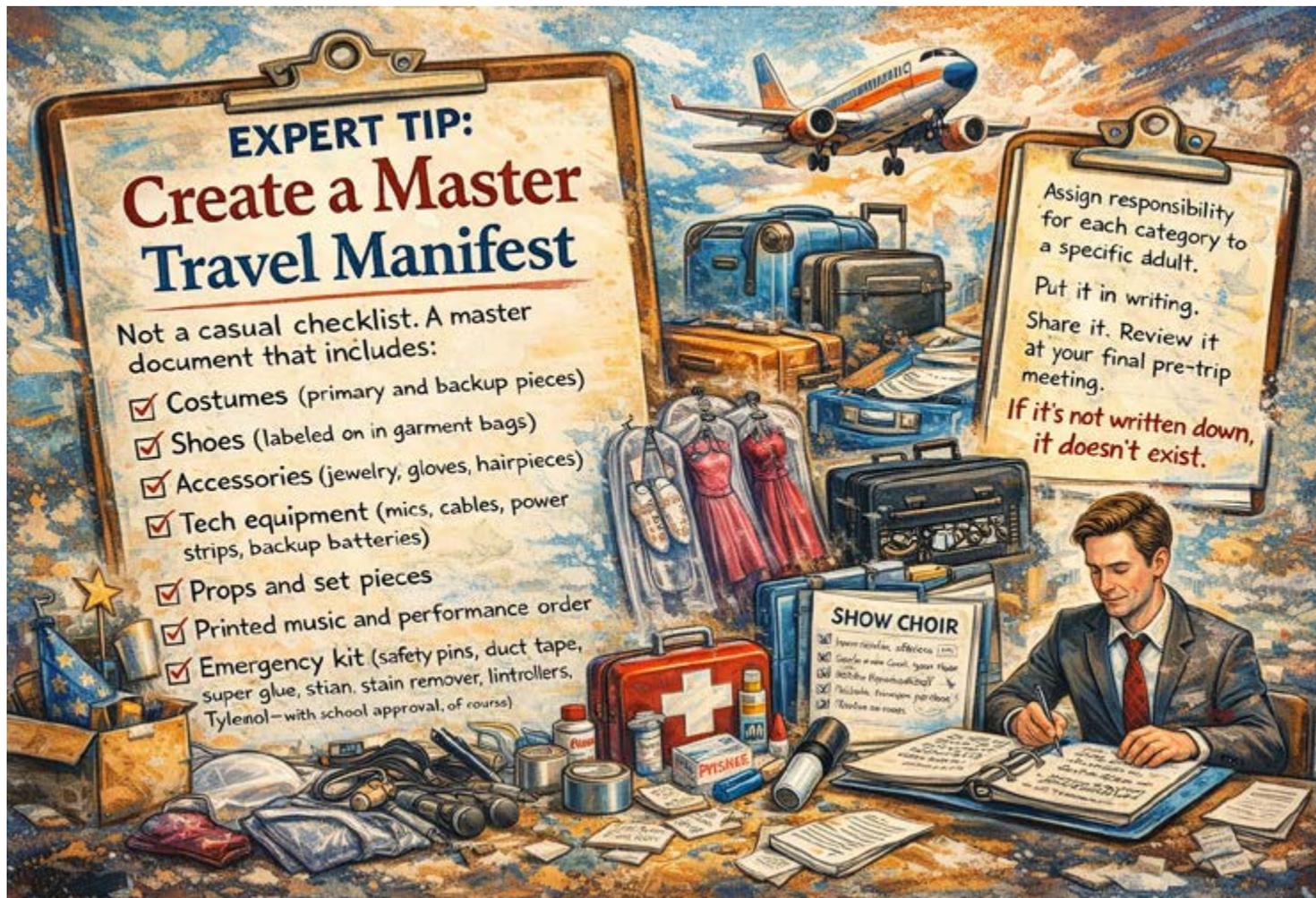
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TEAM ASSIGNMENTS

- Chaperones
- Luggage Crew
- Snacks Team
- Head Counters
- Emergency Contacts
- Emerects Team

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If you've ever loaded 42 teenagers, 16 garment bags, 12 mic packs, a rack of sequins, a fog machine (that you were specifically told not to bring), and one very stressed assistant director onto a charter bus at 4:30 a.m., you already know this truth:

Show choir travel is not a trip.

It's a mobile production.

And like any good production, what the audience sees on stage is only possible because of the carefully managed chaos happening behind the curtain—or in this case, in the bus aisle while someone is asking if they can plug in a curling iron.

Over the years, I've seen just about every travel pitfall imaginable: forgotten costumes, lost room keys, broken costume racks, snow delays, bus drivers who don't believe in GPS, and one infamous incident involving a

glitter explosion in a hotel hallway. (We don't talk about that one.)

But here's the good news: most travel disasters are preventable. And the rest? They're survivable—with planning, humor, and a well-organized booster club.

Let's talk about how to navigate the potholes before your bus hits them.

Pitfall #1: "I Thought You Were Bringing That."

If there's one universal truth in show choir travel, it's this: assumptions will betray you.

Directors assume boosters packed the emergency sewing kit. Boosters assume the choreographer packed the backup music drive. Students assume someone else grabbed the garment steamer.

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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HOW YOUR SHOW CHOIR CAN SAVE LIVES THROUGH THIRST PROJECT

by Damon Brown

Wanna hear a great recipe? What do you get when you mix an inspired show choir graduate, a long-time choreographer, tons of enthusiastic young people, and an urgent human rights need?

The answer: Thirst Project! And here's the best part: your choir can easily join more than 40 others in building its legacy of compassion and love.





The global water crisis is daunting and horrific. More than 700 million people lack access to the basic human right of clean, safe water. Children and the elderly are often forced to walk miles daily to collect filthy drinking water from ponds, streams and holes that are shared with livestock that defecate and urinate in the water. Consuming this toxic water leads to parasites, bacteria, sickness, and far too often, death.

Thirst Project is the leading youth water organization in the world, having already raised over 16 million dollars to give nearly 800,000 people clean water for life. Since 2008, a former Indiana show choir kid, Seth Maxwell, has inspired a movement that's brought about 4,000 wells to 13

countries. Along the way, hundreds of thousands have cared enough to raise awareness and join the fight!

In 2016, long-time choreographer Damon Brown joined Seth on a well-building trip in Africa. Tremendously moved by what he saw, Damon joined the team in 2016, to rally the show choir world under the banner of "Performing Arts For Thirst." This year, the show choir world alone will surpass \$750,000 raised, giving 30,000+ humans clean water for life.

At competitions and school concerts around the USA, show choirs will simply read a 60-second announcement about the water crisis. Next, choir members will pass through the crowd in a "Miracle

Minute," inviting the audience to contribute voluntary donations of cash or scan a QR code to make a tax-deductible contribution. The funds are totaled and sent to Thirst, and every \$25 gives one person the gift of hope, health, and a changed future! It costs you none of your fundraising, is a totally non-controversial cause, and ignites a legacy of love and compassion in your show choir program.

Thirst is neither politically nor religiously affiliated, and we are a registered 501(c)3 with the IRS. Charity Navigator rates **Thirst Project** a "100% RECOMMEND" for financial integrity.

So how about it? If it's this easy, this proven, and this impactful in saving lives,

then why WOULDN'T your choir get involved? Almost zero work, no cost to your program, and lives are changed and saved...win/win!

To get involved, you can connect with Damon Brown at damonb@thirstproject.org.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Damon Brown serves as Outreach Coordinator with heart, humor, and hustle. A proud grandpa of four, marathon runner, shark swimmer, and 38-year choreography veteran, he's taught over 75,000 show choir students. A Ball State graduate and lifelong Colts and Reds fan, Damon leads Show Choir's For Thirst, rallying world changers everywhere.





WHEN THE TROPHY ISN'T YOURS

Managing Disappointment in Show Choir Competition Season

by Ed Bauer

There is a particular kind of silence that happens at a competition.

It comes right after the announcer reads the final placement your group didn't expect.

It's not loud. It's not dramatic. It's just... heavy.

Students stare at the stage. Directors smile tightly. Parents clap because we always clap. And somewhere in that moment, a teenager who has poured months of rehearsals, sweat, sore feet, missed birthday parties, and vocal rest into a three-minute ballad feels the sting of disappointment.

If you've directed long enough—or parented long enough—you know this feeling well.

And here's the truth: disappointment is part of the experience. The key isn't eliminating it. The key is teaching students how to walk through it.

Because how we handle the hard moments may matter even more than the trophies.



First, Let's Be Honest

Competitions are emotional. We ask students to perform under bright lights, in front of judges with score sheets, against groups who are also incredibly talented and equally committed.

Then we rank them.

That's a lot for adults to process. For teenagers? It can feel world-shaking.

As directors, we feel it too. We know the hours invested. We know how close they were. We replay that one transition in our heads and wonder if we should have adjusted tempo.

And parents? You've watched your child practice in the living room. You've driven the carpools. You've written the checks. You've seen the growth.

So when the results don't match the hope, everyone feels it.

That's not weakness. That's love.

The Car Ride Home Matters More Than the Score Sheet

Parents, this is your moment.

The ride home after a tough competition can shape how your child processes the entire experience.

The instinct might be to fix it:

- "The judges were wrong."
- "You should have won."
- "That other group wasn't even that good."

But here's the tender truth: when we dismiss the results entirely, we also dismiss the opportunity for growth.



Instead, try this:

- “I am so proud of how hard you worked.”
- “You performed beautifully.”
- “What part of today are you most proud of?”

Let them talk. Or let them sit quietly. Sometimes processing doesn't happen immediately.

And resist the urge to dissect the judges' comments before they've had a chance to breathe.

What they need first is reassurance that their worth is not tied to placement.

Directors: Set the Tone Before Awards Ever Happen

The most important conversation about disappointment should happen long before the first competition.

Talk about it in rehearsal.

Normalize it.

Say out loud: “There will be days when we don't get the placement we want. That does not erase the work we've done.”

When we frame competition as a chance to grow instead of a referendum on identity, we give students emotional tools.

One practice I've come to value is defining success internally.

Before walking into competition season, ask your group:

- What does a successful performance look like for us?
- What moments are we most proud of?
- What do we want audiences to feel?

When success is defined only by trophies, students ride an emotional roller coaster that is completely out of their control.

When success includes musical growth, storytelling, teamwork, and character, they have something steady to stand on.

The Awards Ceremony Is a Classroom

I've watched students celebrate with grace. I've also seen tears spill over in the hallway.

Both are human.

The awards ceremony is not just about results. It's about modeling dignity.

Directors, stand tall. Applaud other groups sincerely. Smile at your students.

Parents, follow that lead.

Students are watching how the adults in their lives respond. If we grumble, they internalize bitterness. If we demonstrate respect, they learn sportsmanship.

And sometimes the most powerful lesson is learning to clap wholeheartedly for someone else's success.

That skill will serve them far beyond show choir.

When It Really Hurts

Let's not pretend every disappointment is mild.



Sometimes students feel devastated. Maybe it was their senior year. Maybe they nailed the performance. Maybe they truly believed this was “the one.”

In those moments, avoid platitudes.

Saying “It’s just a competition” can feel dismissive when it has been their entire world for months.

Instead, acknowledge the weight: “I know how much this meant to you.” “I can see how disappointed you are.”

Validation doesn’t make them weaker. It helps them process.

And then, gently, help them zoom out. This was a chapter. Not the whole story.

Remember the Why of Show Choir

In the midst of competition season, it’s easy to forget why we started this journey in the first place

It wasn’t for a plaque.

It was for:

- The friendships formed in rehearsal.
- The shy freshman who found confidence.
- The senior who discovered leadership.
- The harmonies that gave students goosebumps.
- The joy of telling a story through music and movement.

Show choir is about belonging.

It’s about discipline.

It’s about creating something beautiful together.

If we reduce it to rankings, we shrink something extraordinary into something transactional.

We must continually remind ourselves—and our students—of the deeper purpose.

The “why” of show choir is growth. Community. Expression. Character.

Trophies are a bonus.

Post-Competition Debrief: Handle With Care

After a tough result, timing is everything.

Directors: Protect Your Own Heart Too

Here's something we don't say enough: directors feel disappointment deeply.

You invest creatively and emotionally. You carry responsibility. You replay every detail.

Give yourself grace.

Talk with trusted colleagues. Reflect honestly. Then release what you cannot control.

Remember that your impact on students is not measured by the size of your trophy case.

It's measured by:

- The confidence they carry into adulthood.
- The resilience they build.
- The love of music that stays with them.

No judge can score that.

Turning Disappointment into Resilience

Disappointment, when handled well, becomes one of the most powerful teachers.

Students learn:

- How to handle criticism.
- How to persevere.
- How to support teammates.
- How to lose with grace.
- How to try again.

These are life skills.

Long after they forget placements, they will remember how they were taught to respond when things didn't go their way.

If we do our job well, they will leave our programs not just as stronger performers—but as stronger people.

The Bigger Picture

Years from now, they won't remember every ranking.

But they will remember:

- The inside jokes on the bus.
- The standing ovation from a crowd.
- The director who believed in them.
- The parents who showed up every time.

And sometimes, the competitions they didn't win will become the stories they tell with the most perspective.

"I learned more from that loss than any win."

That's growth.

Final Thoughts from the Heart

Competition season will always bring highs and lows.

We will celebrate loudly. We will process quietly.

But if we keep the "why" at the center—if we remember that show choir exists to build character, confidence, and connection—then disappointment becomes part of the journey, not the end of it.

To the directors: keep leading with heart.
To the parents: keep loving without conditions.

To the students: your worth was never in the trophy.

It was always in the music you made together.

And that? That can't be ranked.

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.

The bus ride home is not the time for a full technical breakdown.

Give them space.

At the next rehearsal, approach reflection with balance.

Start with strengths:

- What felt solid?
- Where did we grow?
- What moments made you proud?
- Then address improvement as a team:
- What can we refine?
- Where do we have opportunity?

Keep the tone forward-focused, not regret-driven.

The goal is momentum, not guilt.

Parents: Support the Program, Not Just the Placement

It's natural to want your child's group to win.

But the most supportive parents are those who champion the program's culture, not just its trophy count.

- Avoid comparing groups.
- Avoid critiquing other groups.
- Avoid venting frustrations online.

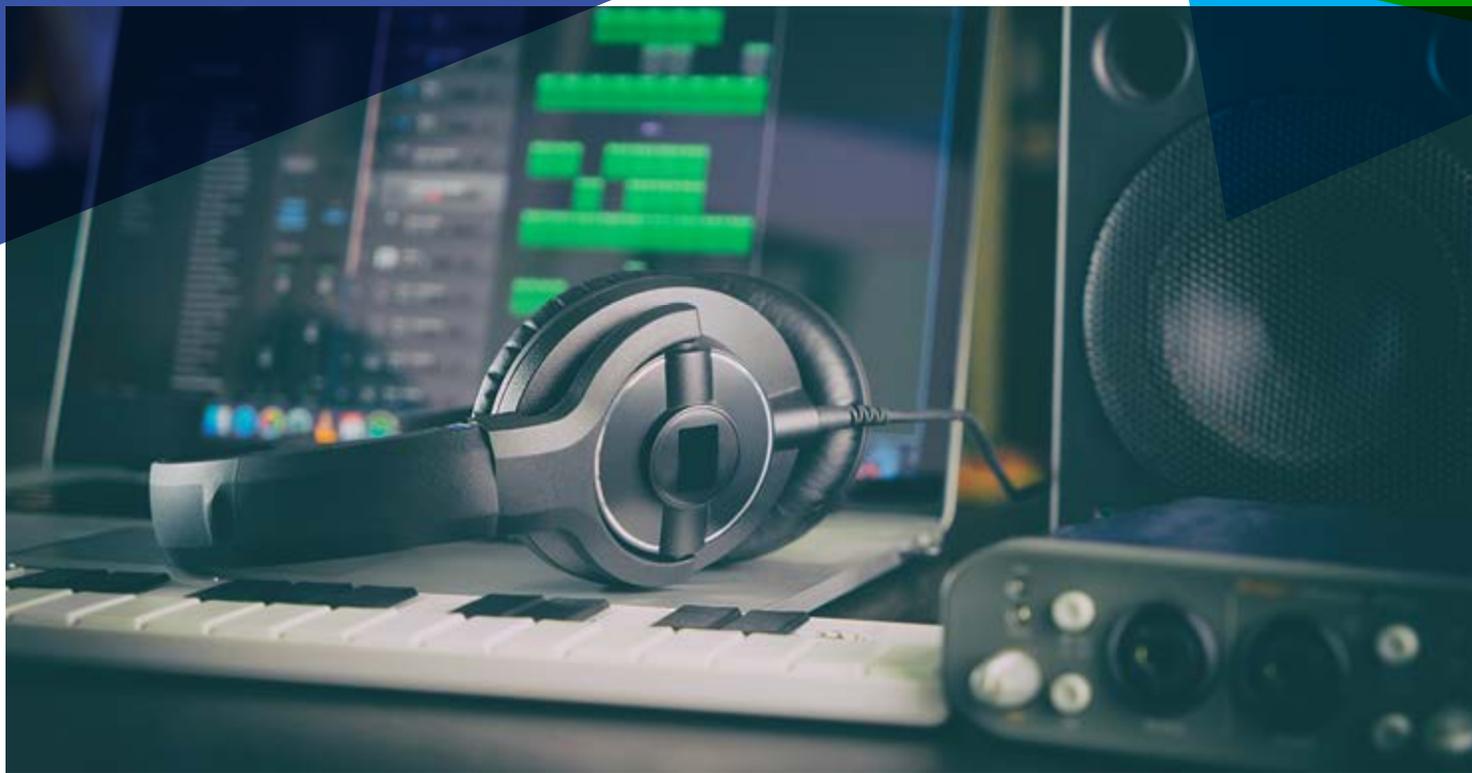
Your words travel faster than you think—and students absorb more than we realize.

Instead, support the long view:

- Encourage perseverance.
- Celebrate growth.
- Thank the directors.
- Model gratitude.

Programs thrive when adults protect the culture.

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www.breezetunes.com

Garrett Breeze is a media composer and arranger living in Nashville, Tennessee. He is known primarily as an arranger for many of the top competitive show choirs throughout the United States and travels regularly in that role as a clinician and adjudicator. In addition to his choral work, Garrett frequently writes for high profile media projects, including film, television, video games, and corporate media. He holds a bachelor's degree in Media Music from Brigham Young University and a master's degree in Commercial Composition and Arranging from Belmont University.

We are proud to have supplied music arrangements to more than 110 choirs throughout the United States and Canada, contributing to over 86 championship wins to date! Breeze Tunes Productions specializes in creating high-quality, competitive arrangements tailored to fit every choir's show design, skill level, and budget. You can search our full catalog of previously arranged titles from our site. To order a new custom arrangement, license a previously arranged title, or to book Garrett for a clinic or workshop with your choir, just fill out the contact form on the site, and he will respond within 24 hours: <https://breezetunes.com/contact>.

MUSIC ARRANGEMENT SERVICES

www.showchoirmusic.com

In the late 1980s, Jeffrey Bowen began arranging for competition show choirs as extra work. During the 1990s, the arranging grew into full-time work and was established as Music Arrangement Services. In 2012, the company became incorporated as Music Arrangement Services, Inc. with the same concept of providing high-quality competition arrangements as well as ensuring the legal licensing of each and every title.

Arrangements have been purchased by schools in over 35 states, several European countries, and Australia. Music Arrangement Services, Inc. provides quality show choir arrangements to competition show choirs all over the country. Our company has hundreds of titles to its credit, so directors will be able to see the wide variety of styles created to make every show choir sound the best!

Music Arrangement Services, Inc. can assist in all licensing and arrangement permissions to ensure the legality of making copies for your rehearsals. Currently, there are hundreds of titles on file that have been created over the decades, including original pieces by Jeffrey Bowen that have been purchased by show choirs around the country.

SHOWCHOIRSTOCK.COM

www.showchoirstock.com

ShowChoirStock.com—the only website that sells nothing but show choir arrangements you can purchase and use immediately! We sell high-quality stock arrangements at affordable prices that DON'T need any further licensing. That's right—you'll never have to go through the extra hassle and expense of using a third-party company in order to perform the music you buy from ShowChoirStock.com.

We have professionally produced rehearsal tracks for every chart and dozens of brand-new arrangements every year. Several complete show packages are available at a 10% discount. Can't find a song that's right for your show? Contact us to see if we can license and add your desired title to our catalog—or have a custom-written original song created just for your group. We accept credit cards as well as purchase orders, so don't miss a beat—order, download, and start rehearsing your music in minutes. ShowChoirStock.com—the only online catalog just for show choir.



PHOTO BY ANGEL BAKER / VESTAVIA HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

CREATIVE COSTUMING & DESIGNS

www.creative-costuming.com

Creative Costuming & Designs was founded in 1992 as a true passion project for husband and wife team Kevin and Noreen Roberts, who once performed in drum corps, band and color guard themselves.

What began in the living room of their Huntington Beach, California home has grown into one of the design industry's leading distributor of custom costumes. Our company's passion to deliver the best design and costumes to every customer remains the same as it was that summer of 1992.

It's that dedication to design and function that has seen the company expand to serve a diverse clientele. Today our creative costumes are not only worn by color guards, drum and wind ensembles but also marching bands, choruses, equestrian, ice skaters, actors, dance teams and more.

Creative Costuming & Designs is dedicated to all groups and levels of competition. Our goal is to make each performer look and feel like a champion. Thank you for allowing us the privilege of helping your performance shine.

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DORNINK

www.dorninkshowchoir.com

Dornink, a custom design fashion house in Des Moines, Iowa, can create your show-choir costumes to perfectly complement your set. Choose from our many styles—or design your own—and let us make your vision a reality. Dornink styles can be customized to fit your set and your budget.

Dornink has 30 years of experience creating show-choir costumes for schools through the Des Moines and surrounding areas. Founder Faythe Dornink began custom sewing costumes for her daughters in show choir in 1992 when she realized their need for a unique look. Since then, designer and daughter Sarah Dornink, educated and trained in New York, has joined the business. Sarah and Faythe will personally work with you to custom design your costumes and create the perfect set.

Whether you're looking for show choir or theatrical costumes, we can design and create just about any style. Be inspired by the many fabric selections on our fabric page. And if you don't see what you're looking for, just ask! Let Dornink set your group apart from the rest. Dornink can design and create the look you need. Our design team is always sourcing new fabrics, styles, and the latest trends to keep your group looking amazing on stage.

SATIN STITCHES

www.satinstitches.com

At Satin Stitches, we pride ourselves for having produced couture-quality performance costumes, right here at our showroom and production facility in Minneapolis, for over 40 years. Deborah J. Nelson has a BFA degree in Fashion Design and founded Satin Stitches in early 1978 after being employed for five years as a Fashion Designer/Patternmaker at a high-end woman's apparel company in Minneapolis. Performance costuming became a passion of hers, along with striving to beautifully and proportionally fit performers of ALL sizes and shapes.

Satin Stitches offers expert design consulting, world-class CAD patternmaking, and couture-quality manufacturing. Our small custom manufacturer's staff has been nurtured and trained by Deborah and her assistants, to create the very best in custom performance costuming.

Customizable, pre-designed show-choir styles are now available in many combinations of fabrics in our web store, shop.satinstitches.com, where budget-friendly designs can be ordered with very fast turnaround times. Both basics and specialty designs are available for small or large show choirs.

BUYER'S GUIDE 2026

COSTUMING



PHOTO COURTESY HAUS OF LAROU AND GAIL MCINNIS

HAUS OF LAROU AND GAIL MCINNIS

www.gailmproductions.com

Gail McInnis Productions, born out of the Haus of Laroue and Gail McInnis, is proud to offer premier costume designs tailor fit for show choirs and performing groups. They offer a wide variety of unique fabrics, custom-made beaded and sequined dresses, and creative costumes to keep up with your group's most imaginative vision for your next production. They also offer an extensive line of men's suits and creative, custom jackets.

Music educators themselves, Gail and Randy McInnis understand the unique needs of the show choir world, from flair to functionality onstage. That's why they offer everything from dresses made to measurement, convertible and tearaway dresses, and themed garments for women to stand-out suits, vests, jackets, tuxedos, and themed garments for men. They also offer a huge selection of men's and women's shoes and stage jewelry to complete the look. Comprehensive measurement and sizing guides are also available on their website or by calling 601.520.3653.

Customer service is a priority, with personal attention paid to each client. For more information, visit www.gailmproductions.com or email them at me@hausoflanoue.com.



PHOTO COURTESY HAUS OF LAROU AND GAIL MCINNIS



CANDLEBERRY CANDLES

www.candleberry.com

Candleberry Candle Company is proud to provide fundraising opportunities for individuals and groups throughout the country. Selling Candleberry Candles is a fun and easy way to gain money for projects, trips, or any other needs. Instead of selling the traditional candy bars and cookies for your fundraiser, try selling some of the most powerfully fragrant candles available. Selling Candleberry Candles provides you with the funds you need with less work.

Born out of Frankfort, Kentucky, Candleberry started making candles in 1997. Each candle is handmade, and no two are like. The same mixing process from years past is still used for each fragrance—precise and measured, with the primary focus being quality. The candlemakers love sharing the enjoyment of an excellent fragrance with as many candle aficionados as possible and creating new products to please its customers.

Candle lines include the decadent and foodie Reminiscent fragrances; the new Coffee Shoppe candles in a variety of scents with wonderful notes of select coffee blends; and Noveau candles, which represent Candleberry's ability to align color, scent, and presentation for a candle that can be used in a variety of decors. For more information, visit the website at candleberry.com.

DUTCH MILL BULBS

www.dutchmillbulbs.com

For over half a century, Dutch Mill Bulbs has been committed to providing our customers with the best available bulbs and rooted perennials. We work only with reputable growers who share our dedication to quality and service. We look forward to an opportunity to earn your business.

Dutch Mill Bulbs was established in 1960 with a company vision based on several criteria. First, we were committed to a unique fundraising idea that was environmentally responsible and available year-round, offering spring and fall flower bulb fundraising programs. Secondly, we would provide no-risk spring and fall flower bulb fundraising programs. Next, we would provide low cost, easy-to-sell, guaranteed to grow and bloom pre-packaged flower bulbs and bare root perennials.

Finally, we committed ourselves to superior responsiveness to customer needs as well as continuous improvement. We've been so successful for so long because we not only stand behind our products with a no-nonsense guarantee, we also stand behind our customers, offering unmatched service and support. Contact us toll free at 800-533-8824 or visit our site to get started on your next fundraiser!

FUN PASTA

www.funpastafundraising.com

Need a great show choir fundraising idea? Earning up to 50% profit, you can sell from our brochure and also online with your webpage link, with free shipping. Prizes include iTunes or Wal-Mart gift cards. Some of the benefits of our program include the following: one-of-a-kind products, made in the USA, affordable price points, healthy and fun products, long shelf life, easy distribution—and no melting or refrigeration. We also have an Online Leader Dashboard and an Auto Alert Marketing Tool for sellers. Fun Pasta Fundraising is both new and unique—a chance to sell Pasta in fun shapes like musical notes, sports, holidays, and more.

Our fundraising program is simple and effective—#1 in Brochure Sales + Online Sales. Your participants will sell from a colorful brochure and also share an online web page link with out-of-town friends and families. Your group can earn 50% profit with total brochure sales over \$4,000 and earn 40% profit with total brochure sales less than \$4,000. All online sales earn 40% profit, and you can earn Bonus Cash Prizes based on total gross sales!

BUYER'S GUIDE 2026 FUNDRAISING



JOSE' MADRID SALSA www.josemadridsalsa.com

With its unique collection of gourmet salsas rooted in original family recipes and made from high-quality ingredients, José Madrid Salsa offers a win-win fundraising opportunity with a unique flair. Some of the benefits Jose' Madrid Salsa offers include a 50 percent profit and the option to choose either traditional or online fundraising, with some groups choosing both options for maximum sales opportunities. At only \$8 a jar, it's a product friends, family, and others will be happy to buy for the salsa itself as well as the chance to support your organization.

Jose' Madrid Salsa comes in 25 flavors ranging from mild to hot, and it's gluten free (with the exception of Chipotle Con Queso). The company even provides tutorials designed to help you make your next fundraiser the most successful yet.

A small business with a huge passion for fundraising, Jose Madrid Salsa introduced its fundraising program with a passion for helping organizations raise much-needed money for their programs. "It's a fulfilling journey where our growth aligns with the accomplishment of shared goals," says founder Mike Zakany. "You won't regret giving us a try."

LIBERTY BEANS COFFEE COMPANY www.libertybeanscoffee.com

How many products are more universally purchased every day than coffee? And not just any coffee, but great coffee made by a company started by a chef and chemist who combined their talents and love for excellent coffee to build a successful craft roasting company?

Meet Liberty Beans Coffee Company and its fundraising program, which has been helping schools, nonprofits, sports teams, and all kinds of other organizations raise funds for years. It's a fun and profitable way for you to help your organization while sharing delicious coffee with the community. The product line, featuring personally selected blends from around the world, is diverse, and you can build your own fundraiser around your selections. Liberty Beans Coffee even offers customized logos for your group, making this a great way for Liberty Beans Coffee to fulfill their passion for making great coffee while supporting great causes. Visit online at www.libertybeanscoffee.com and start calculating how much your group will raise through a Liberty Beans Coffee Company fundraiser.

POPPIN POPCORN www.poppinpopcorn.com

When fundraising season arrives, school and other groups are increasingly looking for companies that offer products their customers want to buy while minimizing unnecessary hassles. Poppin Popcorn—which eliminates refrigeration and shipping headaches—provides the perfect solution. With almost 25 flavors available, you'll find our popcorn almost sells itself! Virtual as well as traditional fundraising options are available, with many groups choosing the virtual option to sell popcorn on social media or through a company link. Through virtual fundraising, Poppin Popcorn will handle all the orders, payments, and shipments for you.

A family-run business in farming, manufacturing and the fundraising industry since 1969, Poppin Popcorn is all natural, healthy, air popped, gluten free, trans-fat free, and shelf stable. Poppin Popcorn also has no additives or preservatives. With our re-sealable saran-coated bags, our product offers a six-month shelf life and can be frozen and thawed.

Better still, students are motivated to sell through great incentive prizes. Visit the website at www.poppinpopcorn.com for flavor selections, fundraising tips, and more.



SCHOOL SPIRIT COFFEE

www.schoolspiritcoffee.com

School Spirit Coffee uses only the highest quality Arabica Beans from Central and South America. All coffee products are roasted specifically to your order at our roastery, Creative Coffees, and guaranteed to be roasted fresh within days of delivery. Since 2005, School Spirit Coffee has been providing a quality product with private label packaging at a great price to help raise funds for school groups and civic organizations.

The idea for School Spirit Coffee came to owner Debbie Hohman as a result of her school spirit and frustration with typical fundraisers. As an active booster mom for fifteen years, with two wonderful daughters, Debbie has helped organize and sell all the typical fundraising products—candy, nuts, wrapping paper, candles, and more. Because of the high cost and low quality, often the items were difficult (or embarrassing) to sell to family and friends.

If you are looking for an easy fundraiser that incorporates great products with your private label at a competitive price, give us a call at 800-570-1443 or submit a request form from the contact page of our website. We would appreciate the opportunity to help you have a fantastic fundraiser.

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PRIESTER'S PECANS

www.priesters.com

Priester's Pecans is a family-owned company specializing in delicious, old-fashioned, farm-fresh gifts like pecan desserts, pecan candies, cakes, and bulk pecans. As we have served as pecan suppliers and candy makers for over seven decades, our Gourmet Pecan Pieces, Gift Tins, and Candies have delighted countless families.

It is our pledge to you that we will only ship the newest, freshest crop of pecans available to you and your gift recipients. At Priester's Pecans, we want you to be satisfied with every purchase. If any item does not completely delight you, we will be glad to honor our 100% satisfaction guarantee. Our ordering process is user-friendly, fast, and efficient. We have organized our fundraising program into as few steps as possible, so you can spend more time raising funds and less time with forms and paperwork.

The advantages of Priester's Fundraising Program are significant. Pecans are versatile; you can use them as ingredients to cook and bake with, as a snack item, or as a topping on desserts, ice cream, and breakfast foods. Additionally, pecans last, unlike fruit or other perishable food items; if stored in the proper environment, pecans can be kept a year or longer. Pecans are also affordable to the consumer and profitable for the fundraiser. Priester's name recognition is second to none, and we have a 100% satisfaction money-back guarantee.

Priester's makes it easy with our No Hassle Fundraising Program, so fundraising has never been easier, more fun, or as profitable. Call us at 800-277-3226 or visit our website today to get started!

SCHERMER'S PECANS

www.schermerpecans.com

Harvested from Georgia orchards that have been in our family for over seventy years, our pecans are always hand selected and fresh shelled. We take pride in our pecans from start to finish; we plant and care for the trees, shell the pecans, and candy the delicious varieties. Schermer's Pecans offers a healthy and delicious option, a fundraiser you can feel good about!

In a nutshell, here's how it works: First, call, email, or download our easy app to sign up. Then, choose from five candied flavors: glazed, dark chocolate, chocolate, cinnamon glazed, and caramel clusters. You can get fresh and natural pecans available in 16-ounce halves, 16 ounce extra-large, and medium pieces, or 12 and 16 ounce small and medium pieces. You can pre-sell or have cases on hand to sell. Profits range from \$2.25-\$3.45 per bag / \$55-\$75 per case.

We offer free shipping in the continental USA, no money up front with approved credit, and 30 days to pay. We will mail you printed order forms to use for selling, or—to make it even easier—you can use our new app to set up your sellers with a link they can share with friends and family on social media or for door-to-door selling.

More about the app: "Orchard" is an innovative fundraising platform that is changing the way your organization can raise money. With its mobile platform, Orchard allows fundraising organizations to present, order, and track their fundraising sales and shipments in real time online. Orchard is built to elevate fundraising activity and results in an easier and engaging manner.



FAME/SHOW CHOIR NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

www.fameproductions.com

For over twenty years, FAME has produced national show-choir competitions and today is the clear leader in producing professional-level events for the nation's best show choirs. Three essential philosophies are woven into the foundation of each of our events: encourage innovation, inspire creativity, and reward excellence. The Show Choir National Championship Series was developed to provide a true national champion!

Six qualifying events take place in Hollywood, Orlando (two weekends), New York, Chicago, and Branson. The top three mixed and top two single-gender show choirs from each world class division at each event will be invited to participate in the National Show Choir Finals the last weekend in April.

In addition, qualified groups that have not competed at one of the qualifying events may apply to compete at the Show Choir National Finals. Learn more about the upcoming events by visiting www.showchoirs.org.

MANHASSET SPECIALTY STANDS

www.manhasset-specialty.com

The Manhasset Specialty Company began in 1935, when inventor and musician, Otto Lagervall, dissatisfied with the quality of the existing music stands and their inherent problems and shortcomings, set out to develop a better music stand. He succeeded in developing the initial Manhasset music stands.

Over the years, new stands and various accessory products have been added to the Manhasset line, and countless improvements have been made to the manufacturing processes. Today at Manhasset, we continue working to research and develop new and unique products to fit the needs of musicians of all ages, as well as to improve upon what has always been the finest quality line of music stands available.

The Manhasset Specialty Company is an employee-owned business—all of us care about the company and our products and take great pride in what we produce. We value our company's reputation very highly and are strongly committed to continuing our tradition of exceptional quality. From our full line of music stands to our innovative accessories that answer our customers' needs, at Manhasset we are continuing in our efforts to bring you the very best.

PEAK PERFORMANCE TOURS

www.peakgrouptravel.com

Performance tours can be really stressful if not properly planned. Your group deserves an inspiring, performance-filled adventure with comfortable and dynamic performance spaces we have pre-screened.

PPT has been helping schools plan comprehensive performance tours by reducing the stress and amping up the fun for over twenty years. Planning a group tour can be overwhelming, but Peak Performance Tours will guide you every step of the way, from concept to completion, in co-designing the right program based on your performance and entertainment goals.

Whether you want to participate in a music festival, perform publicly, or participate in a workshop, PPT can provide you with a proposal for destinations in the USA and beyond. We have experience planning trips for clients with groups of all styles and size. From a live street performance to a Broadway workshop, these tours are designed to give you and your group a broad range of personal and local performance opportunities. Contact us today for your customized performance tour by calling 215-598-8690 or 800-220-0165.



PHOTO COURTESY WENGER

STAGERIGHT

www.StageRight.com

Durable, premium quality, and built for endurance! StageRight leads the pack in platforms and risers design and application. With a legacy dating back to 1984, four decades of groundbreaking solutions have been rigorously tested and perfected in our products. Our services are tailored to meet any space's creative and functional vision. We thrive on collaboration, embracing input from designers and end users to ensure results surpass expectations in style and performance. This is where durability meets design.

Unlock boundless versatility with StageRight equipment. Don't settle for limited functionality. Explore the freedom that our endless configurations for show choir, jazz band, seated choral, and band risers can provide. If your creativity knows no bounds and your environment tests your limits, then contact us online or over the phone for expert consultations, budgeting, and specifications to turn your vision into a reality.

Empowered by an extensive lineup of products, StageRight transforms EVERY classroom, hall, theater, auditorium, or gymnasium for a performance to remember.

STAGING CONCEPTS

www.stagingconcepts.com

Staging Concepts is the industry leader in portable staging equipment. Since 1990, we've provided superior staging product solutions for facilities and venues with custom needs. Our company and team of devoted engineers strive to ensure that we produce the most superior and advanced modular, lightweight custom staging systems in the industry.

Staging Concepts' performing-arts systems and products are designed to maximize any venue. We specialize in building modular stages to seamlessly look and feel permanent. Our customization options can maximize the functionality of your space while giving you the capability to choose a system that perfectly matches your venue. Our equipment is of the finest quality and requires no tools, making it easy and efficient for set-up and take-down.

Performing arts centers, theatres, auditoriums, and other performance facilities demand durable and high-quality equipment for their venues, and Staging Concepts can perfectly fulfill these needs. Whether it is a small portable stage for a choir room, orchestra pit filler for a theatre, or flexible seating risers for a black box, Staging Concepts will provide the ideal equipment to match the project.

WENGER

www.wengercorp.com

Wenger Corporation provides innovative, high-quality products and solutions for music and theatre education as well as performing arts and athletic equipment storage and transport. For more than sixty years, Wenger has been listening to what our customers need, then designing and manufacturing innovative, durable, and functional products to meet those needs.

Wenger pioneered sound isolation in practice rooms and now offers modular rooms with virtual acoustic technology (VAE) and built-in digital recording/playback. Products include pre-engineered acoustical doors, sound-isolating music practice rooms, acoustical shells, instrument and equipment storage cabinets, audience seating, portable stage platforms and staging systems, tiered risers, music furniture, and more.

No other company meets and exceeds the product needs of the music education, performing arts, and athletic markets like Wenger. Our expertise, design capability, and level of service are unmatched in the industry.



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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